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ABSTRACT

"Taking the Lead: Investing in Early Childhood Leadership for the 21st Century" is a national initiative designed to build the capacity of the early care and education field to improve program quality. Taking the Lead is founded on the belief that a diverse cadre of early childhood and school-age care leaders is the key to achieving high-quality programs for children. This report looks at the role mentoring has played in the work of several Taking the Lead sites over the past 3 years. The report's first section, "Crisis in Early Care and Education--The Need for Leadership" discusses the challenge faced by Taking the Lead, its response, and the five key elements of leadership development: community partnerships, cultural/community context, relevant content, mentoring, and opportunities to exercise leadership. The next section focuses on mentoring, using observations from specific sites to address: (1) how to make meaning of mentoring; (2) effective approaches to mentoring; (3) community and cultural context; (4) personal and professional growth; and (5) learning opportunities for mentors and proteges. The final section discusses designing a personal mentoring approach and provides a list of questions to help assess the mentoring needs of early childhood emerging and existing leaders in the community. (EV)

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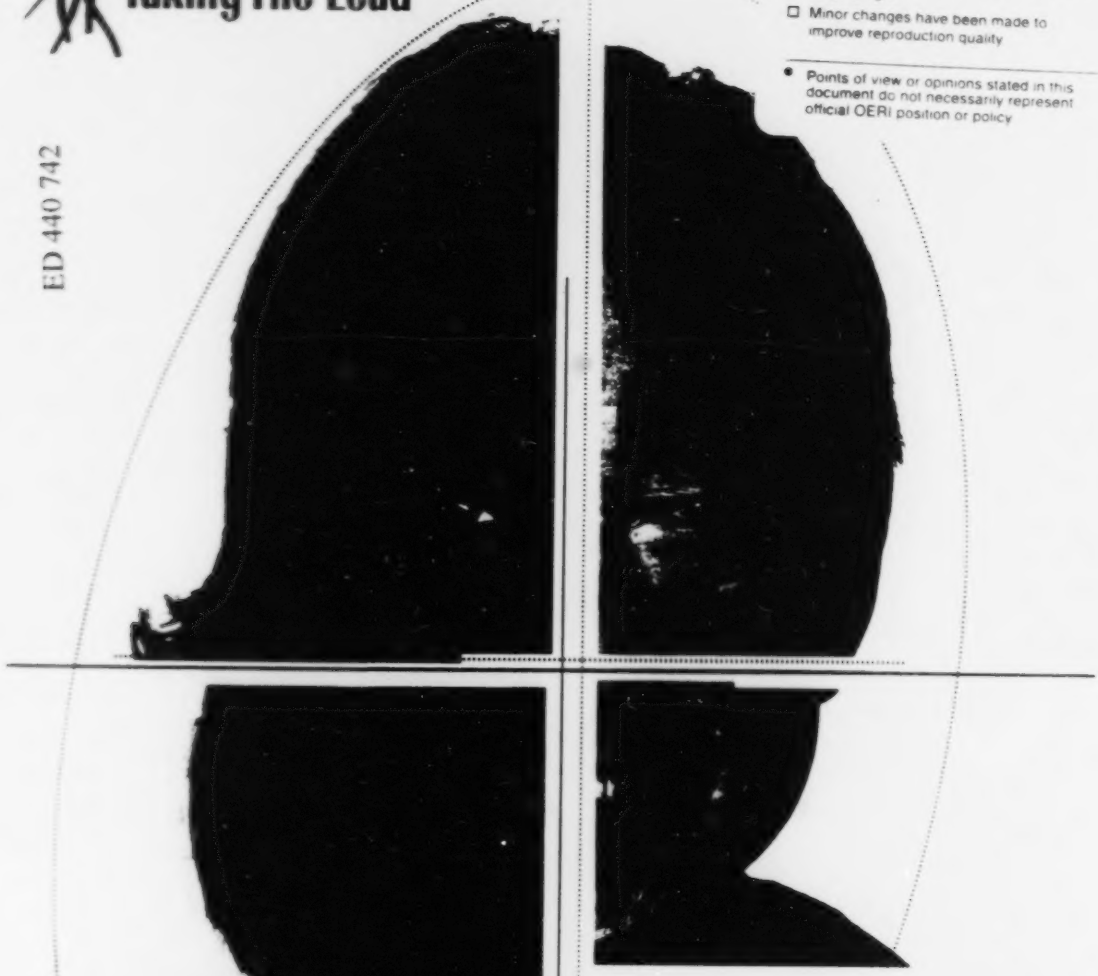
Taking The Lead



The Power of Mentoring

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Taking the Lead: Investing in Early Childhood Leadership for the 21st Century is a national initiative designed to build the capacity of the early care and education field to improve program quality by:

- improving access to leadership development opportunities, building infrastructure and expanding the skills of new and existing leaders within the field to generate increased public support and public and private investment in early care and education; and
- advancing the development of director credentials for administrators/directors of early care and education programs.

Taking the Lead is founded on the belief that a diverse cadre of early childhood and school-age care leaders is the key to achieving high-quality programs for children. Since 1996, *Taking the Lead* has worked to expand the field's knowledge of effective and culturally relevant training practices, strengthen its approach to preparing leaders who represent the needs of all children, and bring about lasting and meaningful changes in our nation's system of child care.

Originally conceived by the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative (ECFC), the initiative is housed at the Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education at Wheelock College. In partnership with other national organizations and government policy makers, the Center strives to improve the quality of early care and education by creating a viable career development system for practitioners. The Center's multifaceted research, technical assistance, training delivery, and information dissemination activities are designed to help states and localities bring about systemic and lasting change.

The Power of **Mentoring**

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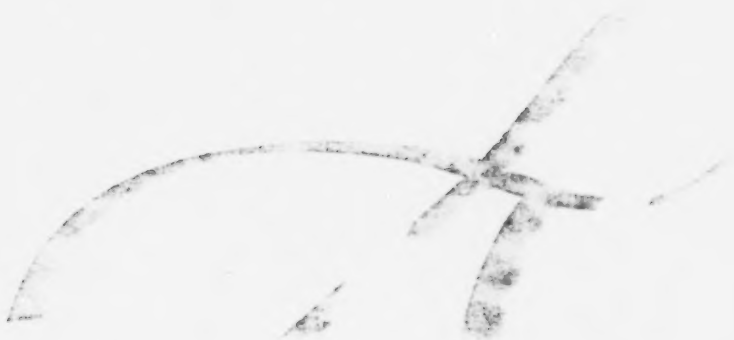

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Preface

This book is about the future. We can't predict it, but we can take an active, informed role in shaping it.

We live in a world that is changing fast. Ours is an increasingly multicultural nation. More families depend on two working parents. More homes are led by single parents.

All of us have an increasing dependence on quality child care. The future, after all, is about our children. And, our children's futures rest in the hands of the people who care for them.

That is why we took up the challenge from the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative to create new strategies to develop and support highly competent and effective leadership in early care and education for the next century. And, that is why we have worked with 10 very different sites across the country to experiment with new approaches to leadership development embedded in community values. Our goal is to establish a leadership that will support and advocate effectively for quality early childhood programs for all children.

Mentoring is a key strategy in professional development in the field, and we have found that mentoring is equally essential to leadership development. All kinds of mentoring relationships – one-on-one, peer mentoring, etc. – provide pivotal support and resources that training alone cannot furnish. Both formal and informal approaches to mentoring provide emerging and existing leaders with significantly transforming experiences. Through mentoring, we can tap into the wisdom of others and share our own strengths.

This look at the role that mentoring played in the work of several of *Taking the Lead*'s sites over the past three years is intended to provide some food for thought and fuel for action. Where are you right now and where do you want to be tomorrow? Mentoring, combined with leadership training, can help you cross the bridge from dreams to reality, from goals to achievements. Delve into the approaches and examples, engage in the dialogue we have begun, and let us know your responses to our ideas. Most importantly, find mentors to support your leadership growth and reach out to mentor others toward leadership.

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Acknowledgments

We salute the members of the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative (ECFC) for their foresight in recognizing the need to expand and diversify the field's cadre of leaders. Each foundation in the ECFC is dedicated to realizing a vision of quality early care and education in the 21st century. We thank them all for their caring and support for young children and their families. It has been an honor to work with the members of the ECFC in managing the *Taking the Lead* Initiative.

For me, this Initiative has been about the people who have been its heart, mind, and soul. Traveling to each of the 10 *Taking the Lead* sites, meeting those doing the work, hearing their extraordinary stories, and seeing the changes in policy, practice, and lives firsthand were incredible experiences. Over the past two years, the site directors and staff, steering committees, collaborators, and participants poured their time, energy, and spirits into carrying out their sites' goals. We deeply appreciate and heartily commend all of their accomplishments. We truly believe that their tireless and ambitious efforts to train and support emerging and existing leaders and design director credentials will improve early childhood services nationwide. And, we thank all of the people from the sites who helped us in the creation of this publication.

The work of each site was considerably strengthened by additional funding and support. We acknowledge and thank each site's funding partners and collaborators for their essential contributions.

The 40 members of *Taking the Lead*'s National Panel of Advisors generously shared their time and wisdom. Their diverse experience, expertise, and perspectives in early care and education, diversity work, and leadership development provided a strong foundation for advancing *Taking the Lead*'s findings and strategies throughout the country.

Without the support of the Wheelock College community and President Marjorie Bakken, the success of *Taking the Lead*'s work would not have been possible. We value this essential contribution.

Reviewers Joyce Copland, Patricia Hnatiuk, Joan Matsalia, Horacio Walker, and John Zuman strengthened this publication significantly. We thank them for sharing their insights and suggestions.

There are literally scores of people to be thanked; if you are not mentioned here by name, please know that your team effort has been invaluable. Here in Boston, our work was ably assisted by a variety of consultants, including our evaluation team at the Intercultural Center for Research in Education.

Taking the Lead's administrative staff supported our director credential and leadership teams – spearheaded by *Taking the Lead* staff members Bess Emanuel and Marcia Farris – and our writing team stewarded by Kim Elliott and Eleanor Chin. Their conscientious, high-quality work and friendly faces made each hurdle passable and each day rewarding.

No words can describe my gratitude for the blessing of Andi Genser as my co-worker and supporter in this important work. Her vision, work ethic, and compassion created the fertile ground from which this Initiative has grown.

Last but not least, we extend our gratitude and praise to all of the initiatives throughout the field that are working to develop and support early childhood leaders for the 21st century. Your work is vitally important, and as we carried out the work of *Taking the Lead* we were inspired by your goals, progress, and foresight.

Cecelia Alvarado, Director
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Crisis in Early Care and Education – *The Need for Leadership*

The Power of Mentoring is part of a series of ***Taking the Lead*** publications and videos about different facets of early care and education leadership development. In this publication, we explore the vital role that mentoring plays in shaping and supporting leaders who can improve the quality of early childhood services. Let's see why leadership development is so important for our field and how mentoring fits in.

THE CHALLENGE

To sustain a strong economy, our society needs high-quality, consistent early care and education that supports working families.[1] To fulfill their potential, children must receive safe, nurturing care that helps them flourish physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually.[2]

During the past two decades, researchers have explored how the field's programs can promote positive child development.[3] Unfortunately, there is real cause for concern that poor-quality programs are failing to support, and are even damaging, our children. Studies reveal that only 14 percent of center-based care, 12 percent of family child care, and an even lower percentage of infant care can be rated as good to excellent. The remainder is rated mediocre to poor.[4]

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The staff turnover in early care and education is high and contributes to the poor quality of services that children receive.[3] Many practitioners in the field do not have sufficient opportunities for formal education and have limited access to a full range of formal training. Low wages and a lack of career paths force early childhood professionals out of the field. Advancement is a particularly critical issue for people of color, who most frequently fill entry-level jobs in the field, with little opportunity to move into leadership roles.[4] To provide quality care, our field needs a stable workforce from all backgrounds who possess knowledge, influence, and leadership skills.

THE RESPONSE

After holding nationwide, extensive discussions and focus groups with the field's leaders, the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative (ECFC) identified some core beliefs upon which *Taking the Lead* is grounded. As we carried out the work of the Initiative, we built upon and added to these beliefs.

- Most people who move into leadership in our field do so without intention, preparation, and ongoing support. There is also commonly a mismatch between the background and life experiences of program leaders and the populations they serve. This promotes the development of program policies, standards, and practices that may be inconsistent with community values and needs.
- Leadership development is a key to creating quality programs that can meet the needs of all children and families. The field needs to develop a diverse cadre of knowledgeable and dedicated leaders who can mobilize public support, build consensus, represent and respond to all ethnic and linguistic communities, and strengthen the field. There is untapped potential for new and emerging leaders throughout the field. Existing leaders need high-quality training and support to realize their full potential.
- People do not have to be in supervisory, administrative, or official roles to be "leaders." All members of the field's workforce – of all heritages, income levels, and varying skill levels – can and should exercise leadership. If given the chance to build their leadership skills, these talented and caring people can contribute to defining and achieving better quality programs.

- To achieve universal quality early childhood programs, we must develop a framework of three interdependent components to guide the efforts of the entire field and any projects within it: equitable *access* to leadership development paths regardless of ability to pay, ethnicity, language, education, or geographic location; *content* that provides the knowledge and skills that leaders will need to be effective in the 21st century; and an *infrastructure* of institutions, recognition systems, regulations, and resources that can support ongoing professional development.

In 1997, with these beliefs firmly in mind, we issued a Request for Proposals and funded 10 very different sites around the nation. Six sites focused on innovative approaches to leadership development. These sites worked to recruit and train emerging leaders in the field – people who possessed the potential to lead, but who may not have fully utilized or had access to the right opportunities, education, and resources. Four sites worked to develop and launch director credentials for their states or communities. We required all of the sites to address access, content, and infrastructure in the design, planning, and implementation of their projects. A list of all *Taking the Lead* sites and contact information for each site is included on page 39.

MENTORING: A KEY ELEMENT OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

As the sites' work unfolded, five key elements played major roles in their successes – elements that emerged from a variety of needs, cultures, and situations. Working in concert, these elements appear to consistently support the kind of leadership development that can equip our 21st-century leaders to be agents of change in their communities and within the field:

- **Community partnerships:** Formal and informal connections or collaborations between groups that represent the needs and interests of members of a geographic, ethnic, religious, linguistic, or professional community. Such partnerships help root and sustain the work of leadership development programs and generate opportunities to exercise leadership for participants.
- **Cultural/community context:** History, values, traditions, expectations, economic realities, and ideals that shape participants' perspectives and actions. People define and value leadership in many ways. Effective leadership programs are designed to expect, accept, validate, and address these differences.

- **Relevant content:** Information, knowledge, and skills that prepare leaders to be effective advocates for quality early care and education. Relevant content incorporates different population's definitions of leadership and includes information and support that prepare participants to succeed in leadership programs.
- **Opportunities to exercise leadership:** Involvement in substantive, "real life" independent or group project work that allows participants to move theory into practice and try out, refine, and expand their newly acquired knowledge and skills.
- **Mentoring:** Coaching and supporting that promotes growth and learning. Approaches include one-on-one mentor and protégé, one mentor to many protégés, peer mentoring, mentors from outside the field, and multitiered mentoring.

In another publication in this series, *The Many Faces of Leadership*, we discuss each of these elements in greater depth.

The Role of Mentoring in Leadership Development

MAKING MEANING OF MENTORING

"Having someone who walked that road, who is still walking that road with you, and who can look at what you are doing from a different perspective and help to open some thoughts to you is great."

- Reverend Gail Sailes, *Taking the Lead* Mentor/Coordinator, ECCN Emerging Leaders Site

When you hear the word "mentor," do the faces of those who "walked that road with you" come to mind? Do you think about what someone said or did that helped you achieve a goal? Most of us can point to one or more relationships with people – teachers, coaches, relatives, neighbors, friends, religious leaders, colleagues, supervisors, support groups – who made a pivotal difference in our lives. Sometimes we are paired with mentors at work or through programs. Sometimes our mentoring relationships develop serendipitously: we find someone who is willing to share themselves and their wisdom with us. Each of these relationships evolves because of our own unique set of circumstances and need to reach out and grow personally or professionally at a certain moment in our lives.

We find the origin of the word "mentor" in Greek legend. In Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus entrusted his friend Mentor with the education of his son, linking mentoring with the concept of guiding, the basis of the traditional mentoring model of the apprentice learning from a master. The concept of mentoring is constantly evolving to fit the times. Haney (1997) noted that the Information Age demands "a wide range of cognitive, interpersonal, and technical skills, and looks at new forms of and perspectives on mentoring and the kinds of learning that results from mentoring relationships."

Today, the word "mentoring" embraces a range of formal and informal relationships that provide personal and professional support over the course of a person's lifetime. New forms of mentoring are emerging and being recognized in many fields (e.g., business, youth work). The word "mentor" can mean many different things to people based on their culture and experiences. Galbraith and Cohen (1995) found that "the benefits of mentoring are not only work related, it can provide opportunities to enhance cultural awareness, aesthetic appreciation, and the potential to lead meaningful lives."

There is a great amount of research on mentoring in education (primarily K-12). In the early childhood field, people often view mentors as excellent teachers or providers "who have worked in the field for a significant time and have received education and training in child development, early childhood education, and the teaching of other adults." In the field's formal professional development mentoring relationships, mentors are often paid stipends. "Mentor" is also a role in many states' early care and education career lattices.

Mentoring is a vital tool to help early childhood professionals improve their skills, move forward in their careers, and remain fulfilled in their work. Mentoring supplements training, supporting lifelong professional growth and promoting hands-on learning. Mentors help emerging leaders attain their goals by providing support, passing along experience and knowledge, and assisting protégés in developing skills.

Outstanding model programs such as the California Early Childhood Mentor Teacher Program (CECMTP) seek to help practitioners advance in the field through formal, mentor/mentee relationships. In addition to these programs, organizations such as National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI) have successfully utilized the one-on-one model of a protegé being guided or coached by a mentor as a leadership development tool.

In the Request for Proposals for the Emerging Leaders sites, we asked applicants to include a mentoring component in their projects. Several sites identified the need to create approaches to mentoring that responded directly to emerging and existing leaders' geographical locations, cultures, needs for resources, and individual or group project goals. Four key themes emerged from the mentoring efforts of sites:

1. **There are many different effective mentoring approaches – one-on-one mentor and protégé, one mentor to many protégés, peer mentoring, mentors from outside the field, and multitiered mentoring – that can be used on their own or in different combinations.**
2. **Community and cultural context influence the format and style of mentoring.**
3. **Mentoring equally supports individual professional and personal growth.**
4. **Effective mentoring provides learning opportunities and benefits for both the mentor and the protégé.**

In the pages that follow, we illustrate each of these four themes with examples from the ***Taking the Lead*** sites. Although all 10 sites had some element of mentoring, we've chosen those that had the strongest components to bring these themes to life. We share these sites' experiences in the hope that they will help you discover new ways to use mentoring formally and informally to support emerging leaders and existing leaders and/or sustain your own growth as a leader.

THEME ONE

Effective Approaches to Mentoring

"I've learned an important lesson in my life. If you see someone who is doing something well, don't turn away from them. Instead, seek them out. Find out everything they know. How do they do what they do? Why do they do it that way? Work hard to learn everything you can from them."

- Reverend Barbara Ingram, ***Taking the Lead*** Mentor/Coordinator, ECCN Emerging Leaders Site

Among the many different effective approaches to mentoring are five we observed at the sites:

- **One-on-one mentor and protégé:** Mentoring that usually pairs an expert or more experienced person holding a position of more responsibility with a protégé wanting to improve his or her professional expertise.
- **One mentor to many protégés:** Usually seen in a committee format, an expert is assigned to mentor a group working toward a common goal. Another member of the group assumes the facilitation role, while the mentor provides information and support.
- **Peer mentoring:** May involve one or more people who see themselves as peers in a profession sharing what they know and are learning, solving mutual problems, and providing support to each other in a formal or informal setting.
- **Mentors from outside the field:** When choosing mentors, protégés sometimes look for individuals with skills and experience that are not necessarily from the profession in which they are working. Deciding factors may be language, culture, class, race, geography, or the need to grow in a particular skill area best mentored by a person outside the respective field.
- **Multitiered mentoring:** As seen in the sites, a director provides support, guidance, and resources to a coordinator. The coordinator provides training and support to community-based mentors who then are assigned several protégés each to offer similar training and support.

It is very likely that these forms of mentoring are known by many other names and used around the world. We have named the approaches, and are providing definitions, in order to write about these concepts clearly. In practice, these approaches to mentoring are often used in combination and are likely to overlap.

For example, we use the Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals Emerging Leaders site in Minnesota to illustrate one form of peer mentoring. However, this site also used mentors from outside the field and employed a one mentor to many protégés approach. The Association of Village Council Presidents Emerging Leaders site in Alaska involved mentors from outside the field. In addition, this site utilized one-on-one mentor and protégé relationships, strengthened by an informal, multitiered mentoring structure and supported by peer mentoring.

We are not suggesting that these approaches to mentoring are the best or only ways to mentor leaders. The Emerging Leaders sites often struggled with how to establish supportive mentoring relationships for emerging and existing leaders. It was not easy, and we are not providing these approaches as flawless models for you to adopt. Instead, we encourage you to learn from the sites' successes and challenges and think about what kind of mentoring best supports the growth of the emerging leaders with whom you are working. Consider which form best meets your project's objectives and complements the focus of emerging and existing leaders' leadership development work. Keep the following questions in mind as you read the five examples:

- Who are your emerging and existing leaders? What are their specific cultural, language, personal, educational, and professional needs?
- Does your project involve a group of emerging leaders who are expected to focus on advocacy at a policy level? Does it make sense for well-known leaders to mentor this group in a one mentor to many protégés approach?
- Will emerging leaders be expected to develop first-time community action projects? Does it make sense to pair them in one-on-one mentor and protégé relationships?
- Are emerging leaders isolated, and do they have very different goals and projects to develop their leadership skills? Does it make sense to bring them together to foster brainstorming, resource sharing, and mutual support?

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- Are there very few early care and education existing leaders in your community? Does it make sense to reach out and involve existing leaders from other fields as mentors?
- Is trust an issue for your emerging leaders? If so, does it make sense to ask strong, "grassroots" early care and education leaders who they already know and who are well respected by emerging leaders – but who may never have had their leadership validated – to serve as mentors?

ONE-ON-ONE MENTOR AND PROTÉGÉ

Advancing Careers in Child Development

CALIFORNIA DIRECTOR CREDENTIAL SITE

This site sought to link director credential coursework to the statewide licensing system and needs of directors in the field. In order to better reflect California's diversity of cultural perspectives, and incorporate the most up-to-date approaches to preparing directors for the 21st century, the site analyzed and revised the content and delivery of college/university courses concerning early childhood program administration.

Approach

Advancing Careers in Child Development served as the umbrella organization for the *Taking the Lead* director credential site in California. A collaborative partner was the California Early Childhood Mentor Program (CECMP). Groups of Director Mentors reviewed curriculum revised through the *Taking the Lead* director credential work. We are including a description of the program here because we feel that it is one good example of a formal, one-on-one mentor and protégé approach. The Director Mentor Program is a part of a pre-existing collaboration between CECMP, 62 community colleges, and the California Department of Education. Overseen by local Mentor Coordinators, the program offers experienced directors the opportunity to provide guidance to new directors. Training and leadership development is a strong focus. Director Mentors are early childhood administrators with at least three years of administrative experience, currently or formerly employed as directors or site supervisors in center-based child development or family child care programs. Novice Directors are new to early childhood administration. The availability of Director Mentors is publicized widely throughout the local early childhood communities. Novice Directors apply to Mentor Coordinators for mentoring. Mentor Coordinators establish and operate the local Mentor Selection Committee, which is responsible for selecting Director Mentors. Mentor Coordinators also pair Mentor Directors with Novice Directors and coordinate the training.

Basics

1. Director Mentors attend a rigorous 2-day, 16-hour Director Mentor Institute to prepare them for mentoring.
2. Director Mentors apply to their local Early Childhood Mentor Program. The application process includes a written application form, submitting references and transcripts, and verification of areas of expertise.
3. Local Director Mentor Selection Committees, composed of early care and education professionals and parents and overseen by CECMP-hired Mentor

Coordinators, review candidates' written applications, references, and transcripts. Once applicants pass the initial screenings, the Committees visit their programs.

4. Novice Directors and Director Mentors sign contracts that specify their means of communication and establish short-term objectives.
5. Director Mentors provide at least 20 hours of support, practical help, and information (e.g., oral and written communication, meetings, visits by mentors to proteges' work sites). They receive a $500 stipend.
6. Director Mentors participate in monthly Director Seminars that focus on supervision, leadership, and advocacy strategies.

Advantages

1. Provides Novice Directors with intensive, one-on-one help and expertise from more seasoned directors.
2. Uses a large, existing infrastructure, but locates control of the program in local communities, garnering significant resources but maintaining a program that is flexible and meets the needs of diverse communities.
3. Provides Director Mentors with opportunities for professional development and growth.
4. Director Seminars are open to all of a community's directors – not just Director Mentors – thereby supporting widespread professional development, peer mentoring, and networking.

Challenge

Some of the sites that tried to develop less formal, one-on-one mentoring relationships between busy mentors and proteges could not establish strong mentoring bonds.

TIP

Select mentors who can commit to intense, one-on-one mentoring. Successful one-on-one mentoring relationships can demand a substantial, consistent investment in time.

ONE MENTOR TO MANY PROTÉGÉS

Spanish American Union, Inc.

MASSACHUSETTS EMERGING LEADERS SITE

A group of Spanish-speaking family child care providers was trained in their native language in leadership skills, advocacy techniques, and basic child care competencies. Their creation of the Latino Family Child Care Providers Association (LFCCPA) gave them a strong voice in their community and provided a vehicle for them to improve the quality of early care and education.

Approach

Emerging leaders formed committees (e.g., membership, professional development, parent advocacy, children's advocacy) to aid them in their collective work to create the LFCCPA. Originally, this site planned to have existing leaders from both inside and outside the field meet quarterly to mentor and support emerging leaders. Because of their excitement about the project, existing leaders instead came to the monthly meetings of emerging leaders. This resulted in more help and information, but was a huge time commitment for the mentors. In response, existing leaders chose one committee to mentor. Each committee consisted of four or five providers plus an existing leader/mentor from early care and education or a related field. Existing leaders' core mission was to work shoulder to shoulder with members of the committees to build a stronger association and to

TIPS

Make sure that mentors clearly understand their roles as resource people and guides.

Be tuned in to the needs of the group of emerging leaders you are training. This form of mentoring allows emerging leaders to be in a group, exchange ideas, and support one another while learning.

facilitate the development of the women with whom they worked. Existing leaders promoted leadership skills, decision-making skills, communication skills, and problem-solving skills. They served as resource people with knowledge and skills and as colleagues working toward a mutual goal. There was also a strong peer mentoring component at this site. Emerging leaders were seen as teachers and role models, as well as learners. All participants were encouraged to share their knowledge and expertise to strengthen the organization. By the end of the project, existing leaders from key organizations outside the field – including higher education, licensing, and the public library – could represent the project most intelligently in their own agencies, thus benefiting the whole provider community.

Basics

1. Emerging leaders met once a month with their peers and the existing leader/mentor assigned to their committee.
2. Emerging leaders who could not attend meetings in person due to family responsibilities attended by phone.
3. Meetings were scheduled at times that were convenient for participants.
4. Participants' transportation needs were addressed.
5. Written materials were translated into Spanish.
6. The presentation and sharing of food was an integral part of meetings.
7. Each committee worked to develop projects and activities related to its mission. Once they finalized an action plan, they brought it to the general membership of the LFCCPA for approval.

Advantages

1. Allows emerging leaders to identify their own leadership development needs.
2. Provides access to skills, resources, and training at the same time it validates existing knowledge within the group.
3. Sees the cultural context as a source of strength, richness, and opportunity.
4. Provides a direct link to existing community agencies that may not have been involved without the mentoring opportunities.
5. Takes the pressure off any one person to be consistently available.
6. Reduces sense of isolation that many family child care providers can experience.
7. Enables both emerging and existing leaders to grow as teachers and learners as they gain access to new resources and skills.
8. Supports development of leadership skills. Emerging leaders have a chance to practice skills by facilitating committees.

Challenge

Committee work is a critical opportunity to practice leadership skills, and emerging leaders must also have the ability to "take the lead." This form of mentoring will not work if mentors attempt to take over the leadership of the committee.

PEER MENTORING

Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals

MINNESOTA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

Twin City area participants pursued their own highly individualized leadership development paths. Emerging and existing leaders were involved in a range of diverse projects designed to improve the quality of early care and education services for children and families in their communities.

Approach

This site utilized "Leadership Circles" – a peer networking model developed by Carter McNamara of the Twin City area of Minnesota – to mentor its emerging and existing leaders. The Circles are groups of 7 to 10 participants founded on the premise that development begins with the individual and fellow learners are true experts in their own right. In Circles, emerging and existing leaders worked together as peer mentors. They took turns talking about their goals and work and shared their experiences, resources, and knowledge. Existing leaders also acted as facilitators and were responsible for setting the tone of the Circles. Participating as equals in the process, they drew people out when needed, genuinely listened, and communicated to participants that they were valued. All participants shared responsibility for each other's progress toward individual goals and successes. During the Circles, each participant reported back on progress in building his or her leadership capacity, improving the lives of children, and coping with personal and professional challenges. Instead of telling each other what to do, Circle peers asked questions, provided links to resources (e.g., training, materials), and shared ideas. Participants felt that the Circles provided an essential "push" that helped them clearly define and pursue their goals. People said what they felt, the trust level was high, and respect for each other's differences was a shared value.

Basics

1. A preliminary, three-hour orientation introduced participants to the Circle concept.
2. Leadership Circles met monthly, for a few hours, at times that were convenient for participants.
3. Many Circles began with ceremonies that were meaningful to the participants.
4. Each participant had 20 minutes to talk about his or her goals and challenges.
5. One-page guides were developed to help facilitators, presenters, and listeners keep the Circles on track.
6. From the first day, facilitators established the tone that everyone in the group had equal value.

7. Participants needed to embrace a philosophy of equality in order for Circles to work.
8. At the end of each Circle, participants reflected on the quality of the session to ensure that it remained practical and meaningful.

Advantages

1. Offers maximum flexibility for meeting the needs of a diverse group of participants with a wide range of goals.
2. Invites genuine acceptance of others and nurtures relationships across racial, educational, and class differences.
3. Allows participants to exercise leadership skills simultaneously with their own growth.
4. Allows participants to recognize their own value in helping others.
5. Low cost.
6. Process is relatively easy to learn and implement.
7. Can be sustained by participants with limited outside help.
8. Supports brainstorming, networking, and sharing of resources.
9. Encourages participants to assert their individual styles and cultural identities in their work.
10. Supports development of leadership skills through individual project work supported by peer mentoring.

Challenge

Barriers to Circles operating effectively can include domineering personalities who can sidetrack the Circle dynamic and the need to keep track of participants' goals.

TIPS

Pay attention to the chemistry of Circles (i.e., the mix and balance of styles, professional levels, culture, and language issues).

All participants must clearly communicate their goals and understand the purpose of the Circles.

MENTORS FROM OUTSIDE THE FIELD

Association of Village Council Presidents, Inc.
ALASKA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

While maintaining important traditional values of Native culture, this geographically remote site trained emerging leaders from 10 different Yup'ik villages to provide leadership both in their communities and in the Western-based cultural context of Head Start and public education programs. Elders are the leaders in the Yup'ik community, and the involvement of village elders in guiding the project was invaluable.

Approach

Yup'ik emerging leaders selected Native and non-Native mentors both from within and outside the field, including Yup'ik elders, a school superintendent, substance abuse counselors, a health care professional, and an early care and education professional. The lack of early childhood practitioners in this remote area, and emerging leaders' own goals and needs for mentoring, guided their selection of mentors. Many of the emerging leaders and mentors formed close, one-on-one relationships. Tight peer mentoring relationships also formed between emerging leaders. Mentors were respected for their hard work, values, dedication to quality for young children, and attentiveness to the wisdom of Native elders. Mentors made commitments to support emerging leaders' personal and professional growth and attend quarterly conferences with them. They supported emerging leaders through one-on-one contact within their villages, answering questions, helping solve problems, and assisting the emerging leaders with planning individual action projects. They were available as necessary with no formal structure established. Additionally, the group of mentors was consulted on every aspect of the project, becoming one of the project's most important resources. Elders became deeply involved not only as mentors to the project's emerging leaders, but to the site director and steering committee; they spoke at each quarterly project conference. Opening up the mentoring process to the elders, and making it possible for them to help ground leadership development in traditional Yup'ik values, meant that emerging leaders gained skills and oriented their development to be responsive to the needs of their own community.

Basics

1. The site director introduced the concept of mentoring by having a Native Alaskan who had been mentored talk about how powerfully mentoring affected her.
2. In small groups, emerging leaders discussed who they would like to have as a mentor.
3. With the assistance of their mentors, Yup'ik emerging leaders designed and carried out projects to benefit children in their villages.
4. Mentors attended *Taking the Lead* conferences with emerging leaders and were available by phone for advice.
5. Funds from *Taking the Lead* enabled peers, mentors, and spouses to attend conferences together.
6. Elders and mentors were consulted about every detail of the project – speakers, logistics of conferences, etc.

TIPS

Often, mentoring works best when protegés choose their mentors. Organize a few events where protegés can meet some prospective mentors to facilitate their selection.

Be open to working with mentors outside of the early childhood field. There are many people with vast experience in community development, community outreach, health prevention, adult education, and other areas who can provide excellent mentoring to early childhood emerging leaders.

Advantages

1. Makes excellent use of indigenous resources in a remote location.
2. Supports authentic leadership development work that does not conflict with community and cultural values.
3. Meets the needs of emerging leaders who – based on culture, environment, and individual needs – want to select a mentor not solely on the basis of early care and education credentials.
4. Gives emerging leaders the ability and responsibility to think about who will best support them and enables them to pick someone they admire.
5. Brings new perspectives and fresh ideas into the field of early care and education.
6. Helps make early childhood programs and systems more responsive to and tuned in to community and cultural strengths, needs, and abilities.
7. Extends the tradition of respect for elder wisdom.
8. Educates leaders from outside the field about the importance of early care and education and prepares them to be advocates for high-quality programs.

Challenge

It can be difficult to form mentoring relationships when mentors and protégés don't know each other and live far apart.

MULTITIERED MENTORING

Ecumenical Child Care Network (ECCN)

MULTI-STATE EMERGING LEADERS SITE

Drawing upon the resources of ECCN's national network, this project involved 24 pairs of church clergy and early childhood program directors from African American church communities in the Richmond (Virginia) and Chicago areas. Supported by leadership training and mentors, participants worked to expand the number and quality of church-based early care and education programs.

Approach

Training for emerging and existing leaders covered a range of leadership competencies. Originally, this site planned for the Mentor Coordinator, a director of a church-based early childhood program, to guide and support teams of pastors and directors of church-based early childhood programs as they underwent the ECCN training. Very quickly, however, three members of the community emerged as strong, existing leaders. These three became Mentor Coordinators for teams from 16 different churches in Virginia that were starting new child care programs or reshaping existing programs in their areas. In the first "tier," ECCN Executive Director Deborah Hampton mentored Mentor Coordinator Jessica Flowers. In the

second tier, Jessica helped the Mentor/Coordinators with ongoing quality improvements to their own early care and education centers, as well as supporting them in their roles as mentors to other church teams. In the third tier, each Mentor/Coordinator then served as a contact between ECCN and the teams of pastors and directors of church-based early childhood programs. They met with participants, provided training using ECCN's leadership development curriculum, guided their projects, helped to lead quarterly meetings, and more. To add even richer layers to this structure, the Mentor/Coordinators formed tight peer mentoring relationships in which they exchanged knowledge, shared resources, and problem-solved together.

Basics

1. Mentor/Coordinators were offered training based on ECCN competencies in how to establish goals and objectives, integrate their ECCN training, and offer guidance and support to teams of pastors and directors of church-based early childhood programs.
2. Mentor/Coordinators and teams were matched by geography or familiarity and existing connections.
3. Mentor/Coordinators received an hourly fee for their work.
4. All project participants met once per quarter as a large group to participate in competency training, share resources and ideas, and support one another.
5. The three Mentor/Coordinators met with their teams monthly, provided them with resources, and were on call to support their progress by phone.
6. Mentor/Coordinators met in person and by phone to provide each other with support and resources.
7. Mentor/Coordinator Jessica Flowers mentored the three Mentor/Coordinators primarily through phone support, and ECCN Executive Director Deborah Hampton mentored Jessica through phone support.

Advantages

1. Generates resources, flowing from many different directions.
2. Builds leadership from underrepresented groups by identifying and working through existing leaders within a local community.
3. Quickly establishes trust by using grassroots leaders who are already known, respected, and can teach and mentor in ways that are true to a community's values.
4. Fosters mentoring relationships between emerging and existing leaders who share a professional role (e.g., early care and education directors with their churches) and can share more specific and informed guidance with their programs, connections with other early childhood agencies, relationships with churches, and individual personal growth.

5. Connects local leaders – who may not possess all of the resources needed to effectively help emerging leaders (and themselves) grow – with mentors from the field but outside the local community who can help them hone their own leadership skills, broaden their perspectives, and improve their abilities to serve as mentors.
6. Supports peer mentoring that enables existing leaders to share resources and guide each other's professional growth.
7. Creates a new and improved network that strengthens the local early care and education infrastructure and thus the potential for more broad-based, coordinated early care and education church initiatives, even after the termination of project funding.
8. Promotes community-based and supported leadership development.

Challenge

Part-time participation brings a variety of challenges, including scheduling, balancing the workload, and remaining actively involved in mentoring and leadership development activities.

TIPS

Be flexible and do not hesitate to change your original mentoring approach if it becomes clear that a different approach, or combination of approaches, will tap into community resources and better meet the needs of participants.

Stay in close contact by phone, fax, and email.

THEME TWO

Community and Cultural Context

"We have found that if you are trying to create a leadership development program in a culture that is not European American, you have to talk to the people who are already considered leaders in that culture. Have these people be the teachers and mentors of the people who are trying to emerge as leaders."

- Sally Herman, Site Director, Alaska Emerging Leaders site

Community and cultural context have a powerful impact on the format and style of mentoring. In observing the sites, we saw that approaches to mentoring can and should vary from one community to the next. We found that leadership programs' mentoring components should dovetail with the values and goals of participants from different cultures and communities. Mentors who understand, support, and respect participants' beliefs help to root the leadership development process in community and cultural values. Mentoring approaches that seek to support participants' own definitions of leadership provide vehicles for drawing on the strengths and resources of a community that might otherwise be overlooked in search of outside "expert" contributions to a leadership development effort.

Association of Village Council Presidents, Inc.
ALASKA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

The qualities the Yup'ik culture values in their leaders and mentors are very different from those that are admired in Western culture. At an all-sites meeting, Alaska Site Director Sally Herman and Emerging Leader Alice Avapan took part in a discussion of leadership with representatives from other *Taking the Lead* sites. Participants were asked to suggest leadership qualities, and representatives from other sites called out words like "energetic," "organized," and "visionary." Alice told the group that in the Yup'ik culture leaders are people who are good listeners. The Yup'ik people live in a remote part of Alaska, there are no roads, extreme summers and winters, and a small population spread over a huge geographic area. Only those who listen carefully to their elders, learn vital subsistence skills and respect for community, repeat these teachings to their children, and are able to ensure their community's physical and cultural survival can be leaders. Humility and the ability to listen to the will of the people are also valued leadership qualities in Yup'ik communities. Sally noted, "When they heard a Western-style leader described, the reaction of my emerging leaders and mentors was that they would not listen to that kind of person. Someone who was charismatic, outspoken, and full of their own ideas would not become a leader in their village. Yup'ik emerging leaders needed mentors who appreciated the richness of their roles as leaders in Yup'ik communities."

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Ecumenical Child Care Network (ECCN)

MULTI-STATE EMERGING LEADERS SITE

One of the most successful aspects of Richmond's mentoring approach was that the mentors who worked directly with teams of pastors and church-based early childhood program directors were from the heart of the early care and education and spiritual communities. The early childhood educators in the African American Christian community in the Richmond area were able to work toward leadership development with the support of local Mentor/Coordinators who already knew their community well. Community values, beliefs, and traditions were infused into ECCN's approach to mentoring. As a result, the project was warm, welcoming, and viewed as sacred and respectful of how the community viewed children and children's needs. Mentors' and emerging leaders' shared religious and cultural values brought a deep emotional and spiritual component to the work that was very strong in the vision of the project. According to Mentor/Coordinator Reverend Barbara Ingram, "In the African American community people are hesitant to embrace a new face. People are not going to listen to someone who just 'arrives on the scene' with some good ideas. To be listened to and respected, that person has to first show that they have an enduring commitment. They have to show that they already have a following – people who believe in them and what they're doing." ECCN Executive Director Deborah Hampton noted, "The local Mentor/Coordinators were the 'crowning jewel' of this effort. They made this project what it is."

Spanish American Union, Inc.

MASSACHUSETTS EMERGING LEADERS SITE

This site's approach to mentoring was embedded in strong Latino cultural norms: working as a community, being inclusive of different groups within the culture, and recognizing everyone's contributions and knowledge. As mentors worked side by side with emerging leaders, all participants drew strength and inspiration from each other. Sharing leadership and responsibility was essential to building community. Association meetings turned out to be not only productive in the sense of getting work done and making decisions, but also a rich, inspiring, mutually respectful, and moving experience. Emerging leaders and mentors came from Spanish-speaking, Latin American backgrounds; holding meetings in Spanish helped participants express themselves freely. The diversity and richness within the group added a sense of cultural pride. SAU Executive Director Maria Morales-Loebl reflected, "Folks wanted to promote more cultural education as part of their work. When they talked about quality early care and education, they talked about teaching culture. It's important that we know our history, our culture. The meetings had *el sabor latino* (latino "flavor"). I was so inspired by these Latino women who had such a passion for their work, which got articulated in the ways they talked about their relationships to each other, the children, and the parents. This work between us was very sacred."

Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals
MINNESOTA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

Most Leadership Circles began with a ceremony chosen by the group to reflect the unique blend of participants' lives. One Circle had members bring and introduce an object of personal significance; another began with a prayer. Site Director Paulie Salazar was impressed by how few conflicts arose between the peer mentors who participated in Circles. She thought the reason participants worked together so well was that they learned how to accept and respect their differences. "Our approach to mentoring and leadership development didn't try to make everyone the same," she reflected. "Rather, we looked for how we could coexist and still be different." The site also discovered that sometimes forming Circles by language and culture best supported emerging leaders' growth. In Circles, participants needed to be able to listen and express themselves on very deep levels. Emerging leaders could not benefit from Circles if they were challenged by differences in language. Also, emerging leaders from ethnic groups that had recently immigrated to the U.S. benefited greatly from single-culture Circles. Leadership Circle Facilitator and Peer Mentor Van-Anh T. Hoang reported, "In our Circle we spoke in Vietnamese about the differences between the U.S. and our ways. We talked about TV, what it is doing to our children – to not use it as a babysitter. We solved problems together – what worked, what didn't." In the Somalian Circles, Leadership Circle Facilitator and Peer Mentor Huda Farah identified "a sense of unity, a certain level of understanding between us because of our shared language, culture, and religion. Being with other Somalians helped me to see the needs of my community more clearly. It pushed me to do more, to try and find solutions. To help my fellow Somalians." Huda's Circle was able to address work and personal issues in their own language and support each other in creating culturally appropriate child care centers/family child care homes in the Somali community.

THEME THREE

Personal and Professional Growth

"I have learned that the work we do is delicate and serious. The family child care providers said: 'I changed my child care, I changed my house, I changed myself. I can see things better. I am a better listener.' Little kids are men and women of the future. I learned to provide for them the best way that I can. Even to my own son."

- Flora Rivera, Emerging Leader, Massachusetts Emerging Leaders site

Taking the Lead sites' emerging and existing leaders were at many different phases of their personal and professional growth and development when they began their training. Mentoring focuses the leadership development process on a person's individual needs. Mentoring encourages leadership development in individual and inter-individual ways. Mentoring helps emerging leaders to recognize their strengths, identify areas to work on, surmount obstacles, pursue professional goals, and actively engage in and maintain a commitment to leadership development training.

Association of Village Council Presidents, Inc.
ALASKA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

At each of this site's conferences, mentors and emerging leaders talked about healing and wholeness – how to keep their personal lives in balance so that they could be leaders in their communities. In this community, the perception is that if you're going to be a leader – to be a good person, do what you're supposed to do, take care of your kids, take care of others in your community, do the subsistence work needed to survive – you need to be healthy and it's important not to be impaired. In this remote region of Alaska, drug and alcohol addiction is a problem. Staying clean and sober is critical to leaders' personal and professional development. In choosing people they admired to be their mentors, several Yup'ik emerging leaders turned to substance abuse counselors. Site Director Sally Herman reflected, "Recovered alcoholics are very effective leaders. They went through life in a difficult way, struggled to heal, and are more compassionate and wiser from their experiences."

Spanish American Union, Inc.
MASSACHUSETTS EMERGING LEADERS SITE

This site wanted to "begin where people were at." A central goal was to create pathways for career development as part of supporting leadership growth. Through committee work, emerging leaders and mentors identified and overcame key obstacles to professional development (e.g., no college courses and materials offered in Spanish in the community). And, group discussions with mentors gave emerging leaders – who lead fairly isolated lives as family child care providers – the opportunity to talk about their lives, the things that mattered to them, their work, and how their work related to the community. Mentors and emerging leaders affirmed each other's knowledge and experience and supported each other in building their skills and pursuing higher learning. The result was a personal and collective transformation. In two years, some emerging leaders took four college courses, others enrolled to get their General Education Diploma, and many began to work toward their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. As they applied the many new things they learned in their work, they realized that they already knew a great deal about children and the field.

Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals
MINNESOTA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

Leadership Circles served as vital sounding boards in which peer mentors supported each other's growth as leaders and professionals. At the same time, Circles recognized that leaders' personal lives and leadership development are inextricably linked. Site Director Paulie Salazar reflected, "It's important to be in tune with where participants are coming from in order to fully support them. If participants had personal issues that impeded their progress, peer mentors helped them resolve those problems. It was vital for all participants to understand and embrace each other for who they were and where they were at that point in time. Then, it became possible to focus on where everyone needed to go next."

THEME FOUR

Learning Opportunities for Mentors and Protégés

"The more I help people, the more skills I gain. The more skills I gain, the more I can help people solve their problems. The more I help, the more confident and happy I am. It makes me want to do more each day."

- Van-Anh T. Hoang, Leadership Circle Facilitator and Peer Mentor, Minnesota Emerging Leaders site

From observing the *Taking the Lead* sites, we learned that mentoring others can be a tremendous growth opportunity. Effective mentoring provides learning opportunities and benefits for both mentors and protégés. Mentoring relationships are a two-way street, in which knowledge, support, and insights flow both ways. Emerging leaders and mentors shared a wealth of early childhood experience and expertise with each other. And, emerging leaders, as well as mentors, served as role models and inspirations. This experience is consistent with one principle about how adults learn: they are rich resources to each other.[10]

Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals

MINNESOTA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

Although Leadership Circles' facilitators were introduced to their Circles as "existing leaders," they discovered that their own growth was as dramatic as that of the other members. Huda Farah, a Somalian biochemist and public health administrator, joined the Circle in the role of Leadership Circle Facilitator and Peer Mentor. Huda quickly learned she had much to gain from the process. She noted, "I feel I already had leadership. The difference now is that I learned to have a vision for my life. The circle helped me see a way to get there and how others can benefit – so it's not just for me." Van-Anh T. Hoang, an interpreter and youth director, also came to the Circles in the role of Facilitator and Peer Mentor. "By being in the Leadership Circle I learned to discover my own potential. I gained so many new skills – now I can help people solve their own problems, see their own responsibilities. This gives me such strength and satisfaction. Before I would see a piece of a problem – now I see the whole picture."

Spanish American Union, Inc.

MASSACHUSETTS EMERGING LEADERS SITE

The women of the Latino Family Child Care Providers Association discovered that emerging leaders can be both learners and teachers. Whether "emerging" or "existing," all the LFCCPA leaders gained and gave in the process of working together. Haydee Hodis, mentor on the children's committee, reflected on how the site's mentoring impacted other areas of her professional life: "I took what I learned from my work with the LFCCPA and applied it to Reforma – a national group of librarians working with Latino communities. I saw what happens when you just put people together. They share ideas and things start to happen." Hodis' connection with the LFCCPA also enriched her work as bilingual librarian in the Springfield Public Library system. Meeting so many community family child care providers, Hodis learned about their need for Spanish language materials and resources. Determined to make the library more useful to them, she started with basic tools, like getting library cards for the providers. Then, she secured grant money to buy Spanish language materials for parents, family child care providers, and the public. Iris Crespo, family child care licensor and mentor with the LFCCPA's professional development committee, related, "I feel so enlightened to have watched the process of these women, seeing them become more professional. They work very hard to provide the best care they can. They inspire me to do my work as best as I can."

Ecumenical Child Care Network (ECCN)

MULTI-STATE EMERGING LEADERS SITE

Resources and wisdom flowed in many different directions at this site. Everyone involved with the project could point to some new insights or information they gleaned. The site's three Mentor/Coordinators provided vital support to each other. Together, they brainstormed solutions to the challenges they faced and shared effective strategies and materials. Their peer mentoring brought additional resources to their mentoring of others, and helped them identify new professional strengths and opportunities. Mentor/Coordinator Reverend Gail Sailes commented, "Being in the meetings with the other directors helped me personally with what I've done with my center. Their sharing of their practical experiences really made a world of difference. And, I felt good to be able to share things." Mentor/Coordinators also learned from the teams of pastors and directors of church-based early childhood programs they mentored. Mentor/Coordinator Pat Harrison reflected, "In working with mentees, I found that sharing my experiences and listening to their experiences helped me to grow. The most exciting part of my role as Mentor/Coordinator was forming relationships with others, connecting people, and building my ability to get resources quickly. This work helped me to see where I needed help and made me feel good about what I was already doing well." For ECCN Executive Director Deborah Hampton, witnessing the Mentor/Coordinators integrate accepted early care and education definitions of developmentally appropriate practices for children with the life of the church has opened a new door. Deborah noted, "I think this is going to lead me to get more involved in research related to spirituality in young children." In this predominantly African American Richmond effort, Mentor/Coordinator Jessica Flowers reflected, "I learned so much from the pastors. It changed me and how I see myself. I have a much greater appreciation now for African American heritage. Yet, at the same time I feel more comfortable with my 'whiteness.' I learned to listen better. And not just with my ears. With my heart. These women opened my eyes. And I thought my eyes were already open."

Association of Village Council Presidents, Inc.

ALASKA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

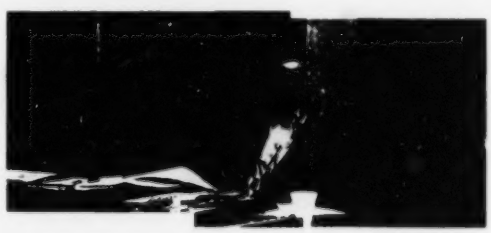
This site's mentoring support and training helped give emerging leaders the confidence to take action in their own communities to improve life for children and families. Steering Committee member Joyce Dey is a non-Native Director of Bethel's Head Start program. Joyce found that two Native emerging leaders who worked in her office had some important lessons to teach her. At one meeting, Joyce mentioned to Emerging Leader Janet Andrews that she was planning a meeting of all Head Start directors from off-road villages. Janet asked her if any Native people would be present, and Joyce found herself pondering the question for the first time. Joyce reflected, "Even though I came to this position with thoughts of empowering people and having local people do the job, my actual actions were that I, with my central office, tended to do more of the planning and didn't reach out to invite others into it. This *Taking the Lead* leadership project pointed out to me, 'Joyce, you have not included all the people you need to. You need to make the circle bigger.'" To make the circle bigger, Joyce invited Native elders to Head Start strategic planning meetings. Joyce began to see Head Start not as a service-delivery program, but as an agency that facilitates giving local people what they want. She noted, "I've been doing this job for two and a half years and this is the first time I've included elders in the planning process. Now I would like to make it part of Head Start's planning policy so that it will always be done."

Designing Your Own Mentoring Approach

We encourage you to use these ideas to develop leadership development action plans that incorporate creative approaches to mentoring. Based on the sites' experiences, we have compiled the following questions to help you assess the mentoring needs of early childhood emerging and existing leaders in your community. Enlist the input of those you will be training in answering these questions, and then fuse together the right blend of approaches for your community's emerging and existing leaders' developmental needs.

Questions to gather emerging leaders' perspectives:

1. What is your racial, cultural, socio-economic, and linguistic background?
2. What leadership qualities do you value?
3. What are your leadership and professional development goals?
4. What do you view as your strengths and what expertise and knowledge can you contribute to our program?



5. What challenges do you face, and in what areas do you need to grow?
6. Would you like to have the opportunity to work closely with, learn from, and share with people who do the same kind of work that you do?
7. Do you feel isolated in your work?
8. Would a close, one-on-one mentoring relationship be helpful to you?
9. Do you have anyone in mind to serve as a mentor to you? Why would you choose that person?

Questions to ask emerging leaders about potential mentors:

1. What qualities do you seek in a mentor?
2. What kind of support do you need to achieve your leadership development and professional goals?
3. Does your mentor need to live close to you because of transportation issues, work schedules, an extreme environment, etc.?
4. Would you hesitate to trust a mentor whom you don't already know? Why?

Questions that designers of leadership development programs should ask when looking for mentors:

1. Who are the early childhood existing leaders in the community?
2. Do mentors have time to devote to intense, one-on-one relationships with protégés?
3. Are there trusted, "grassroots" leaders who are ready to mentor others but have never been asked?
4. Who are the existing leaders from different parts of the community (i.e., business, higher education, health, religion) who could serve as mentors?
5. What languages do they speak?
6. Does it make sense to have proteges choose their own mentors?

Questions that leadership development program designers should ask when creating an approach to mentoring:

1. Are we planning to implement our program in a community that we are not a part of?
2. Are we aware of cultural values/standards that should impact the nature/design of this mentoring program?
3. Does our planning group include members of our target communities?
4. How will we involve target communities in planning this program and its mentoring component?
5. Do emerging leaders in this community need to develop a strong, collective voice in order to improve the quality of early childhood services? What kind of mentoring will best support them?
6. Will emerging leaders be developing their leadership skills by implementing independent projects? What kind of mentoring will best support them?
7. What training, funding, and higher education resources are available and necessary for the success of this program?
8. What barriers are there to accessing these resources? How might these barriers be overcome?
9. What partnership agencies could strengthen and or support our program?

Conclusion

MENTORING TOWARD LEADERSHIP

We believe that mentoring has the power to transform the lives of the early care and education field's emerging and existing leaders. Like many practitioners in our field, most of the *Taking the Lead* sites' emerging leaders had never thought of themselves as leaders. They were often isolated in their work. They encountered a variety of barriers – long hours, hard physical and mental work, classes held during work hours, no training available in their native language – to pursuing professional and educational goals. They were deeply committed to young children and their families. However, many lacked confidence, and their abilities and self-worth had not been validated by established structures and leadership.

Leadership development courses alone cannot nourish these individuals' growth as leaders. Through mentoring relationships, both emerging and existing leaders can receive the vital resources and support they need to work toward their goals. Connections with mentors can enable leaders to thrive in leadership development training and work to improve the quality of early childhood services. At the *Taking the Lead* sites that created strong mentoring structures, mentoring relationships provided emerging leaders with the support they needed to:

- stay connected to vital cultural and community values surrounding leadership;
- thrive in leadership development training;
- believe in their own strengths, knowledge, and ability to improve the quality of early care and education;
- reflect on their work and relationships, hone their professional skills, and improve their practices; and
- work toward career and educational goals.

Are you an emerging or existing leader? We hope you were able to identify with the experiences of your peers at the *Taking the Lead* sites and have some fresh ideas about how mentoring can support your growth as a leader. Are you designing a mentoring and/or early childhood leadership development program? We hope the sites' experiences will stimulate you to design approaches to mentoring that mesh with your emerging and existing leaders' needs, goals, and definitions of leadership.

Some TIPS for the Road: Mentors

Mentors should be selected at the beginning of a project. Difficulties of proteges in selecting mentors at the beginning can be a predictor of unsuccessful mentoring.

Discuss effective strategies with prospective mentors before starting the mentoring process. Set objectives for mentoring with the participation of mentors, and make sure that mentors understand what will be expected of them. In the *Taking the Lead* sites where mentoring relationships did not gel, mentors said it was unclear what they were supposed to do.

A successful mentor listens, takes time to have a clear understanding of the protege, poses questions for reflection, values the protege's experience, and does not overwhelm the protege with information.

"When I call my mentor for advice, he asks, 'What do YOU want to do?'"

- Sara Owens, Emerging Leader, Alaska Emerging Leaders site

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Glossary of Terms

Throughout this publication, we use the following definitions to describe core concepts, organizations, and terminology.

Access: Equitable entry onto leadership development paths regardless of an individual's ability to pay, ethnicity, primary language, geographic location, current position in the field, skill level, professional connections, or familiarity with the higher education system.

Barriers: Obstacles that impede efforts to engage and sustain involvement in leadership development activities. These might include lack of opportunities to gain basic skills or attain literacy; lack of available education or training in one's native language; instructors whose teaching methods contradict one's value systems and/or communication styles; training schedules that interfere with family or work responsibilities; lack of geographically accessible training; and lack of continuity between leadership training and opportunities to assume leadership roles or recognized early care and education positions.

Content: Information, knowledge, and skills that leaders need to possess to be effective in the 21st century.

Culturally relevant: An approach to training, program design, mentoring, and/or the development of early care and education systems that respects, incorporates, and supports differences in values, approaches, learning styles, and perspectives of those shaped by varying backgrounds. Using a culturally relevant approach allows individuals to derive greater participation and meaning from educational opportunities and professional experiences, and can lead to early care and education systems that better reflect the diversity of the populations we serve.

Director: Represents a variety of titles used by early childhood and school-age programs to describe the person ultimately in charge of an early care and education organization, including but not limited to program director, site supervisor, manager, executive director, or administrator.

Director credential: The awarding of a certificate, permit, or other document that certifies that an individual has mastered a specific set of defined skills and knowledge, and has demonstrated competencies to prepare for performance as a director in any early care and education setting (e.g., Head Start, private not-for-profit programs, for-profit programs, public and private schools). The body that awards the credential may or may not be the same organization that delivers the training. A credential may be awarded by a professional organization, state agency, higher education consortium, etc., and signifies a consensus by those groups of the validity of the standards set forth.

Early care and education: All types of education and care for children from birth through age five, as well as programs for school-age children before and after school and during vacations. *Child care*, *early childhood*, and *early care and education* are used interchangeably in this publication.

Early Childhood Funders Collaborative (ECFC): This organization represents 17 regional and national private funders who united in an effort to improve the quality of early care and education in our country. The ECFC initiated *Taking the Lead* in 1996 and fully funded the Initiative from 1996 to 1999.

Ecumenical Child Care Network (ECCN): A national, Christian faith-based, early care and education advocacy organization. ECCN believes that the cohesiveness of the relationship between churches and their early care and education programs is critical to ensuring high-quality care for children.

Emerging leaders: Individuals in all roles and at varying skill levels who have the desire to assume leadership roles within their programs, communities, or broader arenas within the field. These individuals often have not fully utilized or had access to opportunities, education, personal experience and support, and/or professional resources that could enable them to assume these roles.

Existing leaders: Individuals who already serve in recognized leadership roles and who may need access to opportunities, education, personal experience and support, or professional resources that could enable them to expand their leadership capabilities.

Family child care: Child care that is legally provided by an unrelated adult in the provider's home. In many states, family child care may be either *small family child care* (a single provider caring for children) or *large family child care*, sometimes called "group homes" (two providers, or one provider and an assistant, working together to care for children in one of their homes).

High quality and quality (early care and education): Safe, nurturing care that supports young children's sound physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development.

Infrastructure: The institutions, recognition systems, regulations, guiding principles, networks, resources, and defined pathways that are in place to comprise the field's professional or leadership development systems. A structure that may welcome, support, and aid in the progression of emerging and existing leaders or thwart their efforts.

Leadership: Exercising the skills, attitudes, experiences, understanding, and knowledge necessary to guide and/or work in unison with others to achieve a common goal or agenda.

Leadership Circles: A peer networking model developed by Carter McNamara of the Twin Cities area of Minnesota. The process involves the gathering of 7 to 10 peers for a period of two to three hours. During this time, circle participants are allowed turns to "present" their goals and receive highly focused feedback, questions, and links to resources – rather than specific advice – from fellow circle peers.

Mentor: A peer, a more experienced colleague, or a member of the community who supports the leadership, personal, and professional development of another individual.

Practitioner, early childhood professional, provider, teacher: Often used interchangeably, to describe early care and education professionals who work directly with young children in a variety of teaching roles and settings.

Protégé, mentee: Often used interchangeably to describe individuals who engage in mentoring relationships with more experienced colleagues.

Sites: Initiatives across the country that were selected and funded by *Taking the Lead* to pilot innovative approaches to leadership development or the development of a director's credential. The geographic focus of the sites ranges from a single community to an entire state to multiple locations across the country.

Spanish American Union (SAU): Western Massachusetts' oldest community-based Latino organization. With strong roots in Springfield's Latino community, the SAU has given birth to many grassroots groups that focus on engaging people in their own development.

Steering committees: Groups of collaborators that oversaw the work of each site.

Underrepresented groups: As defined for the purposes of *Taking the Lead* only, people of color, individuals of low income, those in lower-status roles, and linguistic minorities – groups that are not equitably represented in the ranks of early care and education leaders.

Other *Taking the Lead* publications:

Booklets/Resources

The Many Faces of Leadership

Authentic Leadership: Lessons on the Journey from Inclusion to Quality

Director Credential Action Plan

Videos

Leaders in the Making: New Pathways to Quality (approx. 20 min.)

The Case for Director Credentialing (approx. 5 min.)

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